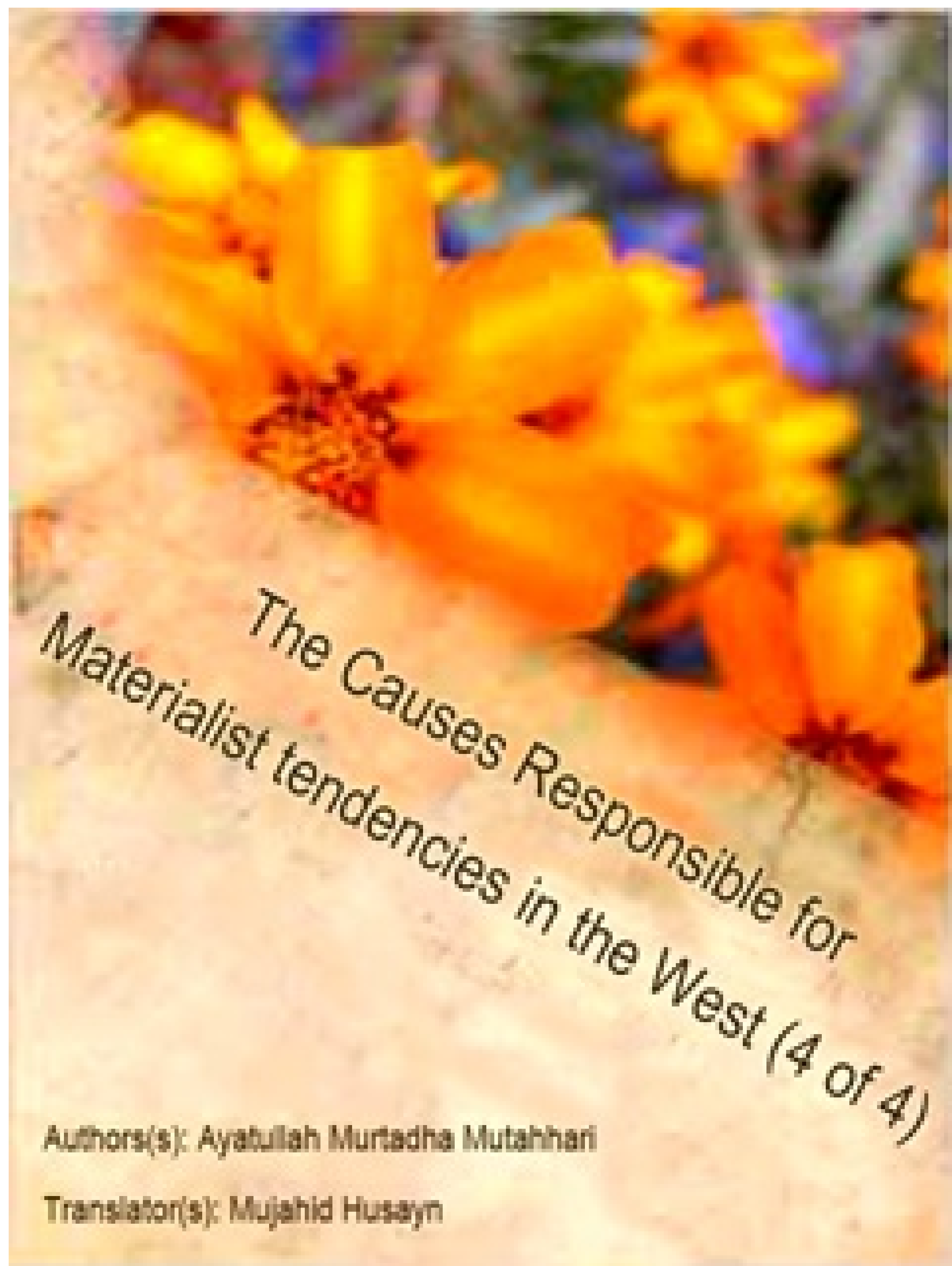

The Causes Responsible for
Materialist tendencies in the West (4 of 4)
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Martyr Murtadha Mutahhari

The Inadequacy of the Social and Political Concepts

The third cause of the growth of materialist tendencies was the inadequacy of certain social and political concepts. In the history of political philosophy we find that when certain social and political ideas were propounded in the West and the issue of natural rights, especially the people's right to sovereignty, was raised, a group advocated

despotism. It did not recognize any right for the masses vis-à-vis the rulers, and the .only thing it recognized for the people was their duty and obligation to the latter

In order to lend justification to their arguments in favor of despotic rule, they took recourse in theology, claiming that the rulers were not answerable to the people but only to God, while the people were answerable to the rulers and owed a duty to them. The people had no right to question the ruler's actions or to assign him a duty. Only God was entitled to question him and call him to account. Thus the people had no right .over the ruler, although he had rights over them which it was their duty to fulfill

As a natural consequence, there arose in the minds a kind of artificial

connection and implication between faith in God on the one hand and belief in the necessity of submitting to the ruler and forfeiting all rights to question someone whom God has elected to protect the people and whom He has made answerable only to Himself. Similarly, there arose a necessary implication between the right of .popular sovereignty on the one hand and atheism on the other

Dr. Mahmud Sina'i, in the book Azadi-ye fard wa qudrat-e dawlat, ("Individual Liberty and the Power of the State") writes: "In Europe political absolutism and the idea that freedom was basically the State's prerogative and not of the individual, was linked ".with belief in God

It came to be thought that if one accepted God, one also had to accept the tyranny of the State's absolute power, to accept that the individual had no right vis-à-vis the .ruler and the ruler was not responsible to the people, but only to God

Therefore, people imagined that if they accepted God they would, of necessity, have to accept social repression as well, and if they wanted social freedom they would .have to negate God. Hence they preferred social freedom

However, from the viewpoint of the social philosophy of Islam, the ruler is responsible to the people, and there is not only no necessary implication between faith in God and recognition of despotic rule of persons, but, on the contrary, it is only faith in God which makes the ruler responsible to society, bestows rights upon the

.individuals, and prescribes restoration of rights as an essential religious obligation

Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a), who was a political and social leader as well as an infallible :Imam chosen by God, in a speech delivered during the turmoil of Siffin, states

By giving me authority over you, God, the Exalted, has created a right for me over you, and you too have a right over me, similar to my right over you ... A right is always reciprocal: it does not accrue to anyone without accruing against him as well, and it does not accrue against a person unless it accrues in his favour. If there is anyone who has a right without there being a corresponding right over him, that is only God, the Exalted, to the exclusion of His creatures, because of His power over His .creatures and His justice which permeates all His decrees

This implies that rights are reciprocal, and everyone who enjoys a right will have a .responsibility in return

From the Islamic point of view, religious conceptions have always been tantamount to freedom, precisely in opposition to Dr. Sana'i observation concerning what took place .in the West, where religious teachings were equated with repression

Quite clearly, such an approach would have no other consequence except distancing people from religion and driving them towards materialism and opposition to religion, .God, or anything having a divine hue

There are three other causes of the tendency towards materialism which it is necessary to mention. These three causes are

common both among us as well as the Christians. All these three causes relate to the method of preaching or practice which the adherents of religions have been following .in the past or do so at present

Non–Specialist Opinions

There are certain issues regarding which people give themselves the right to express their opinion. This was so in the past concerning health issues. If someone spoke about some complaint he suffered from, every listener would express his opinion .about its cause, symptoms, and remedy

Everyone believed in his prerogative to express his opinion, and, at times, if he had the influence or power, or at least the patient was shy of resisting his suggestions, they would force him to apply the prescription whose efficacy was a total certainty. It was unheard of for anyone to think that dealing with health problems required specialized training, that one had to be a physician, a pharmacologist, with the necessary years of study under a teacher as well as sufficient experience. But it was as if everybody considered himself a doctor. Even today the same notion prevails .among one group of people

Precisely the same was true of religious topics, and it continues to remain so, with everybody giving himself the right to advance his opinion. Religious topics, especially those relating to theology and Divine Unity, are among the most complicated of .scientific issues, on which everyone does not have the ability to express an opinion

Although the fundamentals of theology—to the extent that people in general

are required to know and believe in—are both simple and innate (fitra), but when one takes a step further the issues involving God's Attributes, Names, Acts, and those relating to qada and qadar come to the fore and the problems become extraordinarily complicated. In the words of Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ('a): 'It is a deep ocean,' whose depths can be fathomed only by whales. The identification and study of Divine Attributes and Names is not something which lies within the power of everyone; yet we see that everyone considers himself a specialist in this field and does not hesitate to argue, express his viewpoint, and advance a proof, at times making ridiculous .statements

It is said that once a priest wished to illustrate the principle of teleology, to explain that the order of the universe was purposive and that the universe is moving along a purposive course. Thereby he wished to prove that the Creator possesses wisdom, .knowledge, and will

Although, as we know, that is not a difficult task and the creation of any existent can be cited as evidence, the priest chose the lines on the muskmelon to illustrate his point. The reason behind its orderly lines, he said, was that when we want to divide the muskmelon among the members of one's family, the lines were for the knife to cut equal slices so that children did not fight amongst themselves and create a !confusion

Now an example from our society. They say that someone posed the

question as to why God had given wings to the pigeon and not to the camel. The reply he suggested was: Were the camel to have wings, life would have been a nightmare, .as the camel would fly and wreck our homes of mud and clay

Another one was asked about the evidence for God's existence. He replied: "Unless ".there were an atom of truth in a matter, people wouldn't make a mountain out of it

One of the major causes of irreligion and the inclination towards materialism are the weak reasons often advanced by unqualified people concerning issues pertaining to Divine wisdom, will, and omnipotence, Divine justice, Divine dispositions (qada' wa qadar), freewill and determinism, the world's preeternity or its having come into existence (huduth wa qidam), life after death, the Purgatory (barzakh), Resurrection '(ma'ad), heaven and hell, the Sirat and the Balance, and so on, which often makes the listeners mistakenly imagine that what some of these ignorant persons say are the teachings of religion and that they speak from an in-depth knowledge of these .teachings

It is a great calamity for scholars, especially in Shi'i circles, when persons who neither have an understanding of the theist thought nor that of the materialists, taking advantage the confusion and disorganization prevailing in the system of religious preaching, write books weaving together a mass of absurdities to refute the materialist viewpoint, becoming a laughing stock. It is obvious that such preaching is to the benefit of materialism, and the numerous

.books of this kind written in our own time can serve as an example

?God or Life

Initially, it is necessary to take note of a certain point in order to make clear what we .intend to discuss

Man is compelled to obey his instinctive urges. He is endowed with certain instincts which urge him towards a goal envisaged in his creation. This does not mean that he should follow his instincts blindly; rather, what is meant is that the existence of these instincts is not purposeless, and that they may not be ignored. Neither they may be neglected, nor they are to be totally opposed. The instincts are be refined, .moderated, and guided, and this is a separate issue

For example, man has an urge to have children. This urge is not a petty thing, and is a masterpiece of Divine creation. Were it not for this urge, creation would not have continued However, in the scheme of creation this urge has been placed in every animal as something attractive and sweet, so that each generation is employed in the service of the succeeding generation, while also enjoying this service. This attachment has not been placed just in the preceding generation. In human beings every succeeding generation has been made to feel attachment towards the preceding generation, though not with the intensity of the preceding generation's .attachment to it. These attachments are the secret of relationships

Another instinctive urge in man is his curiosity, his desire to seek the truth and acquire

knowledge. It is possible to hinder people temporarily from research, quest, and the pursuit of knowledge, but it is not possible to permanently impede the truth-seeking .human spirit and its quest for knowledge

Among human instincts is the love of wealth. Of course, the love of wealth is not a primary instinct in man; that is, it is not that man loves wealth for its own sake. Rather, since it is in his nature and instinct to seek satisfaction of corporal needs of life, and since the means of satisfying these wants are money and wealth in certain societies, such as ours, he loves wealth as the key to all his material needs. One who possesses money seems to have all the keys, while the one without it finds all doors closed upon .him

As we have already said, it is not possible to oppose a natural and instinctive urge by permanently neglecting it, though it is possible for a short period to draw society in that direction, or to draw a limited number of people permanently towards it. But man and human society cannot be stopped forever from responding to the demands of .any one of these instincts

For example, it is not possible to convince everyone to forego everything and to forswear the mysterious magic of the key called 'money' and 'wealth' as something .filthy and detestable

Now if these instincts are repressed in the name of God or religion, and celibacy and monasticism are considered holy in

the name of faith, and marriage a defilement; if ignorance be considered as being conducive to salvation in the name faith and knowledge as the means of perdition; if in the name of religion wealth, power, and prosperity be considered sources of eternal wretchedness, and poverty, weakness, and deprivation the causes of bliss ?and happiness; what will be the consequences

Consider a person who on the one hand gravitates towards religion and religious teachings and, on the other, is strongly drawn towards these things. Eventually, he will either opt for one of these two, or he will, like most people, remain entangled in :the conflict between these two forces, like some of whom it has been said

,The scripture in one hand, and the wine goblet in the other

.Oft within the lawful, and often out of bounds

:This results in a wavering disposition

(Neither with these, nor with those." (۴:۱۴۳"

In fact such a person becomes a full-fledged psychic case with all its peculiarities and symptoms. The function of religion and its message is not to wipe out the natural urges, but to moderate, refine, and guide them and to bring them under one's control. Since instincts cannot and should not be annihilated, the inevitable outcome, in societies where they are repressed in the name of God, religion, and faith, and where the worship of God is considered as incompatible with life, is the defeat of these sublime ideas and concepts and the prevalence of materialism and other atheistic and anti-religious trends

.of thought

Therefore, it must be categorically said that ignorant ascetics in every society—and unfortunately there are many of them in our own midst—are a major cause of the .people's inclination towards materialism

:Russell says

The teachings of the Church put man in the position of having to choose between two misfortunes: wretchedness in the world and deprivation from its pleasures, or wretchedness in the hereafter and deprivation from its joys ...From the viewpoint of the Church one must bear either of these two misfortunes. One must either submit to the world's misery and languish in isolation and wretchedness in return for the pleasures of paradise, or accept deprivation in the next if one wishes to enjoys this .life

The first and foremost objection and criticism against this kind of approach arises from the side of the genuine logic of monotheism and theology. Why should God require that man must compulsorily endure one of the two misfortunes? Why should it not be possible to combine both the kinds of happiness? Is God a miser?! Will it diminish the stores of His mercy?! Why shouldn't God desire our happiness in this world as well as in the Hereafter? If there is a God, an infinite omnipotent being, then .He must desire our complete happiness and well-being

And if He does desire our complete happiness, it implies that He desires our happiness in this world as well as in the Hereafter. Bertrand Russell is one of those who are deeply offended by this

teaching of the Church, and perhaps this teaching had a major role in the .development of his anti-God and anti-religious sentiments

Those who have preached, and continue to preach, such a notion have imagined that the reason why certain things such as wine, gambling, fornication, injustice and so on have been proscribed in religion is that these things lead to happiness and pleasure, while religion is against happiness and pleasure, and God wants man to go without happiness, bliss, and enjoyment in this world so that he may be happy in the .Hereafter! The reality is precisely the opposite

These prohibitions and restraints are because of the fact that these things result in making life miserable and gloomy. If God has made the drinking of wine unlawful, that does not imply that you will be happy in the world if you drink and that the happiness of this world is incompatible with the happiness of the Hereafter. Rather it means that it has been prohibited as it is the cause of wretchedness in this world as well as the .next

All the prohibited things are of this kind, that is, had they not been the cause of wretchedness they would not have been prohibited. Similar is the case with religious obligations; that is, since religious obligations result in felicity and are a source of salutary effects in the present life, they have been made obligatory. It is not that they have been made obligatory for partially curtailing the happiness of

.this world

The Qur'an expressly proclaims the benefits and advantages of the obligatory duties and the harms and evils of prohibited things. For example, it explains in these verses :the vital quality of prayer and fasting and the strength they lend to human character

Seek assistance in patience and prayer, and they are indeed difficult save for the" (humble." (۲:۴۵

:It observes concerning fasting

O believers, prescribed for you is the fast, as it was prescribed for those that were" (before you, that you may be Godwary". (۲:۱۸۳

This implies that one should pray and fast so that one's spirit is strengthened and so that one is purged of bad qualities. Prayer and fasting are a kind of exercise and .training which restrain one from perpetrating evil and abominable acts

These teachings not only do not consider worldly and spiritual matters as contradictory, but, on the contrary, spiritual matters are presented as a means of .attaining harmony with an environment conducive to a happy life

The false teachings of some preachers caused people to flee from religion and led them to imagine that belief in God necessarily involves the acceptance of poverty and .enduring hardship and disgrace in this world

An Unfavourable Moral and Social Environment

Another cause of the growth of the materialist tendency is the disharmony between a person's inner spiritual and moral ethos and the thoughts relating to faith in God and His worship. Faith in God and devotion to Him naturally require a special kind of sublimity in the spirit. It is a seed

.which grows in a wholesome soil and is ruined in polluted and saline soils

If man falls victim to the pursuit of corporal appetites, becoming materialistic and a prisoner of his base desires, gradually his thoughts begin to conform with his spiritual .and moral ethos, in accordance with the principle of conformity with environment

The sublime thoughts relating to faith, worship, and the love of God give way to degenerate materialistic ideas and to nihilism and a sense of the futility of life, and the feeling that there is no moral principle governing the world and that all that matters is .transitory pleasures of the moment, and the like

Every thought requires a conducive spiritual climate for its survival and growth, and :how well this has been alluded to in religious traditions where it is observed that

.Angels do not enter a house where there is a dog or a canine form

This was in relation to one's inner spiritual environs. Here a question may be asked: What about one's social environment? The answer is that we have mentioned the proximate cause, and there is no doubt that the social environment also needs to be .favorable. But the impact of the social environment is not direct on one's beliefs

A corrupt social environment initially spoils one's spiritual ethos, and a corrupt spiritual state weakens the basis for the growth of sublime thoughts and strengthens the basis for the growth of base ideas. This is why great attention has been paid in Islam

to the reform of social environment, and it is again for the same reason that the forces pursuing the policy of eradicating higher thoughts from the people's minds prepare the ground for moral and behavioral corruption, and for doing so corrupt the .social environment with the means at their disposal

In order to elucidate the effects of an unfavorable spiritual environment upon materialist leanings, there is no alternative to explaining what we have alluded to .earlier

Earlier we said that materialism is, at times, doctrinal, and at others, moral. Moral materialism means that although a person may doctrinally believe in the supranatural, he is a materialist morally and behaviourally. Moral materialism, as mentioned earlier, is one of the causes of doctrinal materialism. In other words, an unrestrained pursuit of sensual appetites and lusts and wallowing in the quagmire of hedonism are one of the causes of the growth of an intellectual leaning towards .materialism

Moral materialism implies a state in which one's life is devoid of any kind of moral and .spiritual ideal

Is it possible that one should be a theist in respect of belief while his acts do not reflect his faith, being, in practice, a materialist? Further, is it possible that a person be doctrinally a materialist, without being a materialist in practice, i.e. with a life free from ?and uncorrupted by excesses, transgression, and tyrannical behavior

Finally, is it possible for moral materialism to exist in isolation from doctrinal materialism? The answer is: Yes, it is

possible, and occurs often, though it is not something which may last for long, or which can be counted upon. That is because it is an unnatural condition and that which is against nature and the natural order of cause and effect cannot survive for long.

Further, wherever this separation exists, either behavior influences belief and alters it, or belief and ideals make their impact and alter the mode of behavior. As a result either faith gives in to behavior or behavior subdues faith. It is hard to believe that someone can remain a theist all his life doctrinally and intellectually, while being a materialist in practice. Eventually one of the two sides will subdue the other and he will perforce incline towards one of them.

Similarly, a person who is a materialist in mind and belief, will either become a theist, sooner or later, or his moral rectitude will give way to moral materialism. These two types of materialism, doctrinal and moral, are cause and effect of each other and belong to the category of reciprocal causes and effects, that is, each one of them happens to be the cause of the other as well as its effect.

When one's mind arrives at the conclusion that the world is purposeless, that there is no sense, intelligence, and consciousness in it, that mankind are a creature of chance, without purpose, and that one's file is closed forever after death, such a person will naturally start thinking that he should enjoy

every moment at his disposal instead of worrying about good and evil and wasting .one's life

A nihilistic mode of thought in which existence, life and creation are considered useless, will naturally result in moral materialism, especially because this mode of thought is extraordinarily painful and exhausting. Generally, those who have such ideas become escapists, flying from themselves, trying to run away from their own tormenting thoughts. They are always after something which can keep these noxious .thoughts, which torment them like scorpions, at bay

They seek diversions, or take refuge in narcotics and intoxicants. At the least, they turn to such parties and gatherings which provide amusements, that they may forget .themselves and their thoughts, gradually sinking in moral materialism

Thus the reason that materialism in belief leads to moral materialism is not solely that the logical basis of a morality based upon chastity and piety is shaken and there remain no grounds for foregoing corporal pleasures. It is not just that sensual appetites do their work in the absence of a spiritual restraint provided by divine .thoughts

Rather, there is another reason. Materialist ideas concerning the world, life, and creation cause a person great anguish and pain and create in him a state in which he develops an inclination to escape these thoughts and seek refuge in diversions, which include among other things the quest of pleasures and use of intoxicants and drugs. The repellent impact of these frightful thoughts is not less than the attraction of .material pleasures

The converse of this condition is also possible. In the same manner in which doctrinal materialism leads to moral materialism, moral materialism also eventually leads to doctrinal materialism. That is, in the same way that thought influences moral behavior, moral behavior, too, influences thought and belief. The main purpose of raising this issue in our discussion of the causes of materialist tendencies, which has .led up to the issue of unfavorable spiritual and moral social environs, lies here

A question may possibly be raised here: what is the relationship between conduct and thought? Isn't thought separate from action? Isn't it possible that a person might think in a particular manner and his pattern of thinking might persist without his actions and moral conduct conforming to it and that they might take a different ?direction

The answer is that faith and belief are not just abstract ideas which occupy a part of the brain, having nothing to do with the other parts of man's being. There are many such ideas which have no connection with human behavior, such as mathematical knowledge and concepts and information and most of the information relating to .nature and geography

But there are thoughts which, due to their links with one's destiny, dominate one's entire being and establish their sway over everything. When such thoughts appear, they give rise to a chain of other thoughts and alter man's course in life. It is like the story of the little pupil who remained reticent despite being repeatedly

told by the teacher to say “A.” When he remained tongue-tied after much insistence, the teacher asked him, “What harm would it do you were you to say 'A'?” He replied, “If I say 'A,' the matter won't end there. Then I will have to say 'B,' and then a long .”chain will follow. If I don't say 'A,' it will be good riddance to the end

:Sa'di says

,The heart said, occult knowledge do I seek

.Teach me some, should it be in your reach. 'Alpha,' said I

'!Then what?' it said. 'Nothing'

'!Said I, 'A letter is enough, if anyone be there

The matter of God is just like the 'alpha' of the child's first lesson, which once said will immediately be followed by a 'beta' and then the rest of the alphabet of the knowledge of the Divine. Man, when he accepts God, will have to accept that God is the knower of all secrets and hidden things, is omnipotent and all-wise, and that there .is nothing purposeless in anything that He does

This would imply that man's creation too has a purpose and aim. Inevitably the question will arise: Is man's life limited to this present life, or he has some duties as well? Has the One who created man assigned him any duty to perform, or is it that He ?has not done so? And if there is some duty, what is it and how is it to be performed

This is an alpha which does not let one

alone unless one surrenders all his life to it. This is the path which the Divine alpha .traces out for man

On this basis, the knowledge of God requires a favorable spiritual and social clime. And in the event the spiritual and social clime is not favorable, the roots of spirituality dry up, destroyed like a seed which is sown in the soil but does not get the proper .environment to grow

Faith in God demands a ready spiritual ground for its growth. It seeks spiritual edification and the sublimity of the spirit. It seeks to bring the spirit into harmony with the purpose of life and creation. This is the reason why the Noble Qur'an throughout :speaks of receptivity, purity, and receptive capability. It says

a guidance for the God wary; and in order that one who is alive may be warned;" .((۳۶:۷۰

On the other hand, moral sins and vices degrade the spirit from its state of sanctity. Consequently, this kind of thought and that kind of conduct are two contradictory .forces

This is not so only with respect to the sacred ideas of religion; rather, all sublime thoughts, whether they belong to religion or not, are of this type. Nobility, courage, and boldness of the spirit do not grow in everyone. The notions of honour, freedom, .justice and concern for the welfare of the people do not flourish in all kinds of people

They decline and undergo erosion in a person given to sensual appetites and ,amusements

while they grow in a selfless person and one who has freed himself from corporal attachments. Therefore, whenever people incline towards sensual lusts, appetites, comforts, and amusements, all these human excellences die and men wallow in the .quagmire of moral vices, and that is how societies and individuals degenerate

A historical example of this is the downfall of Islamic Spain. Despite every effort to wrest it from the Muslims, the Church was unable to do so until it devised a cunning plan and deprived them of their spiritual eminence, making them addicted to wine and sensual pleasures and robbing them of their sense of honour and dignity. Thereby it was able at first to destroy their supremacy and sovereignty and then their religion .and beliefs

The awliya' and saints used to abstain even from many permissible pleasures and were cautious of being captivated by them, because once one gets addicted to pleasures, his soul is deprived of its sublimity, to say nothing of those who get .accustomed to sin

In Islamic texts this idea has been presented in the form of the notion that sin blackens the heart and a blackened heart breeds faithlessness. In other words, black .deeds make a black heart and a black heart gives rise to mental darkness

Then the end of those who committed vices was that they repudiated the signs of God (.... (۳۰:۱۰

Bastion of Heroism and Dissent

The causes and factors dealt with earlier, under such titles as, 'inadequacies in the religious ideas of the Church,' 'the inadequacy

of the philosophical concepts,' 'the inadequacy of the social-and political ideas,' defective methods of religious preaching, and 'unfavourable moral and social environment,' are either related to past history and do not play any role in the materialist tendencies of our times, or are causes which are common to all ages and .are not exclusive to our own

Now we would like to study the peculiar materialist tendencies of our own times. In our age materialism has more or less an attraction, though this attraction is not of the kind it possessed two centuries ago from the point of view of Enlightenment and its .links with the growth of science

In the ١٨th and ١٩th centuries, due to inadequacies in the religious ideas of the Church and the philosophical concepts, there arose a wave based on the idea that one had to choose between science and knowledge on the one hand and God and religion on the other. But it did not take long for this false wave to subside, and it became clear how .baseless it was

The attraction of materialism in our age is from another angle, from the angle of its revolutionary character and its quality of political dissent and confrontation, for which .it has become well-known

Today, to a certain extent, this idea has gone into the minds of the youth that one must either be a believer in God, and therefore a pacifist and an indifferent quietist, or a materialist, and, consequently, an activist, a nonconformist

.and an enemy of imperialism, exploitation, and despotism

Why is it that such an idea has found its way into the minds of the youth? Why is materialism identified with these characteristics, and the Divine school of thought with those? What is it that leads to infer these qualities from materialism and those ?from theist thought

The reply to these questions is clear. It is not at all necessary that this be logically deducible from materialism and its opposite from the school of Divine thought, .because the youth are not bothered about formal logical inference

A youth sees something and that is sufficient for him to arrive at a conclusion. The young people see that uprisings, revolutions, struggle and confrontations are staged by materialists, while believers are generally found in the camp of the inactive and the indifferent. For a youth this is sufficient for pronouncing a negative judgment on the .school of Divine thought, and a favorable judgment about materialism

Presently the majority of struggles against despotism and exploitation are being staged under the leadership of individuals more or less inclined towards materialism. There is no doubt that the bastion of heroism is to a large extent in their occupation. .Activism and revolution have been relatively monopolized by them

We must accept that religious ideas in our times are devoid of any kind of heroism. On the other hand, taking into consideration the reaction which injustice and oppression produce on the minds of the dispossessed and oppressed, and in view of

the spirit of hero-worship which is present in all people, it is sufficient that the positive value of this work be credited to the account of materialism, while the negative value of the practical approach which the believers have adopted these days be put to the .account of God and religion

This situation appears strange, because, in principle, it should have been the opposite. It is faith in God and His worship which link man to objectives transcending material things and endow him with the spirit of sacrifice on the path of these objectives, contrary to materialism which naturally links man to matter and material things and personal life as an individual, and that too a life lived within the narrow confines of .corporal existence

Moreover, history shows that it were always the prophets and their followers who revolted against the tyrants, pharaohs and nimrods, and shattered the forces of evil. It were the prophets who, with the power of faith, mobilized the dispossessed and oppressed masses into a great force against the mala' (the corrupt elite) and the mutrifin (the affluent class). The Noble Qur'an, in the Surat al-Qasas, states

And We desire to be gracious to those that were weakened in the earth, that We may" make them leaders, and that We make them the inheritors, and that We may establish them in the earth, and that We may show Pharaoh and Haman, and their (hosts, what they used to dread from them". (۲۸:۵-۶

:At another place it says

How many a prophet there has been, alongside of whom many godly men have" fought, and they slackened not neither weakened for what smote them in God's way, nor did they abase themselves; and God loves the patient. And what they said was nothing but, 'Lord, forgive us our sins, and our excesses in our affair, and make firm our feet, and help us against the faithless folk. And God give them the reward of this world and the fairest reward of the Hereafter; and God loves the good-doers". (۳:۱۴۶-۸)

In the verses of the Surat al-Qasas it has been said: 'We desire to establish them in the earth.' Now we will mention a Qur'anic verse which highlights the conduct of the followers of the prophets when their power is established in the land. In the Surat al-Haj; it says:

Those who, when We establish them in the earth, maintain the prayer and pay the" alms bid to what s right and forbid what is wrong; and unto God belongs the final issue (of affairs". (۲۲:۴۱)

This implies that they always strive to fulfill their duty, and as to its being fruitful or fruitless, that is something which depends upon a set of factors and circumstances which lie in the hands of God.

It is also stated in the same verses ot the Surat al-Qasas that: 'We intend to make them leaders". Now we will mention a verse from the Qur'an which clearly explains what kind of people have the capacity for

:leadership in the Divine scheme of things. God says in the Surat Alif Lam Mim Sajdah

And We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command, whenthey" (endured patiently, and had convinced faith in Our signs". (۳۲:۲۴

:The Noble Qur'an mentions at another place

God has graced with a mighty wage those who struggle over the ones who ones who" (sit". (۴:۹۵

:At another place it says

God surely loves those who fight in His way in ranks, as though they were a building" (well-compacted." (۶۱:۴

At yet another place the Noble Qur'an mirrors their heroic and valiant aspirations in :this manners

Our Lord, pour out upon us patience, and make firm our feet, and aid us against the" (faithless folk"' (۲:۲۵۰

These are not the only pertinent verses and there are many of them. Can one find a greater and better instance of epical enthusiasm. The Qur'an is replete with references to combat and jihad, to commanding what is right and good and forbidding .what is wrong and evil

Such being the case, how is it that the platform of revolution and confrontation was taken away from the followers of God and how come the materialists occupied it? That which is really surprising is that even the followers of the Qur'an have .abandoned this platform

It is not amazing if the Church did so, because for centuries it has been sneering at the Qur'an, Islam, and its Prophet (s) for having violated the codes of monasticism and cloistral seclusion, for rising against

tyrants, and revolting against worldly powers, for not leaving to Caesar that which belonged to Caesar and to God what belonged to God

But it is really surprising for those who claim to be followers of the Qur'an. We believe that the abandoning of this platform by the worshippers of God, and similarly its occupation by the followers of materialist thought, have each a separate cause of .their own

This platform was abandoned by the worshippers of God when those who claimed to be religious leaders developed the spirit of seeking a life of ease and comfort. To put it more precisely, this phenomenon occurred when self-seeking people and those who sought the mundane ends of life, or, in the words of the scripture, 'worldly people' .occupied the seat of the prophets and genuine religious leaders

The people too mistook them for their representatives and successors, though spirit was totally opposed to that of the prophets, the Imams, and their true disciples, and if .there was at all any resemblance, it was confined to appearance and dress

Obviously these people interpreted, and still interpret, religious teachings in a manner which does not burden them with any duty and does not contradict their easy-going ways in the least. Knowingly or unwittingly they distorted certain religious concepts, .employing them against religion itself

There exists among the Shi'ah a sane and wise concept that is endorsed by the Qur'an as well as reason. This concept is called taqiyyah (dissimulation). Taqiyyah consists of employing sensible

tactics in combat for safeguarding one's forces in a better manner. It is obvious that every individual is an element of vital force and his life, economic resources and social status constitute an asset for the battlefront. Utmost effort should be made to .safeguard this asset and force

Why should the forces be needlessly wasted? Why should the sources of strength be weakened? The front should remain strong and powerful to the greatest extent .possible

Taqiyyah is like using a shield in battle. This word is from the root waqa, meaning shielding. The duty of a combatant in combat is not just attack to the enemy. Self-protection, to the extent possible, is also his duty. Taqiyyah implies the maximum of striking power with minimum losses. At any rate, taqiyyah is a reasonable and wise .tactic in the course of struggle

But today we see that this word has been totally divested of its real meaning, being imbued in the process with a meaning totally non combative. From the viewpoint of self-seekers, taqiyyah means abandoning the battlefield, leaving it for the enemy, .and devoting oneself to inconsequent debates and pointless polemics

As to how the materialists came to take over this bastion, it may possibly be said that the reason behind their occupation of this front was its abandonment by the theists. .But this observation is not correct. There is another reason for it

In this regard the Church is more to blame than anyone else. In the West, as ,mentioned earlier

there were presented certain illogical concepts concerning God, the Hereafter, and Jesus Christ, which were unacceptable to free thinking and enlightened individuals. That which was presented in the name of theology, affiliated to the Church, was of a .similar nature

In addition, there developed, on the one hand, an artificial connection between faith in God and belief in the legitimacy of despotism and repression, and, on the other, between godlessness and the people's right to self-determination and struggle the .for civil liberties

These factors led some social reformers and activists to straight away reject God—and, for that matter, every idea originating from the concept of God—for the sake of freeing themselves totally from these restraints in their social struggles, and turn to .materialism

Their followers, who were fascinated by their social teachings, gradually started thinking that perhaps materialism had a miraculous quality and was capable of giving .birth to such combative individuals

But the fact was that these individuals had not acquired this strength from materialism; rather, it was materialism which gained strength from these people and consequently acquired some respectability. The inclination of these individuals towards materialism was not in any way due to its merits; rather, it was result of the evils that afflicted the so-called religious establishment on the intellectual, moral, .scientific, and social sides

Now we see that some short-sighted people fancy that there is some kind of a relation between materialism and socialism, which concerns itself with the economic, social and political conditions of society, while in

reality there exists no such relationship. In fact, much of the respectability and credibility of materialism in the present age is due to the pseudo-connection it has .developed with socialism

To be sure we do not intend to exaggerate and claim that at present materialism has been able to capture from the theists all the bastions of revolutionary initiative, reconstruction, and combativeness. Such a general statement especially does not at all hold true of the Islamic world. The history of the last half a century of anti-colonial .struggles in the Islamic countries is the best proof of this claim

It is predicted that enlightened Muslims will gradually capture this bastion which rightfully belongs to them. It is even said that, that which is taking place in South-East Asia and has amazed the world, is, contrary to some propaganda, accompanied by a .kind of spirituality and anti-materialist dimensions

But we should neither deny that such has been the case in recent past, and even .today atheists are considered the real champions of these platforms

Conclusion

What is the practical conclusion that we derived from the study of the causes and ?factors responsible for materialist tendencies

I again admit that I do not claim this study to be complete and comprehensive. Certain causes and factors might have remained hidden from me. Also I might have been mistaken in the analysis of some of these factors. Obviously, those who interpret history on the basis of economics describe these events in a different manner and

.see the future in another way

Although I do not consider my study sufficient for giving a definitive opinion about the causes and factors responsible for materialist tendencies and consider a more accurate and inclusive analysis as necessary, yet I am not prepared to simply follow .others and blindly accept their views

Let us now see as to what is the remedy and what is to be done from the viewpoint of those who are interested in the spread and propagation of the message of tawhid, in whose opinion mankind's deliverance hangs on knowing and worshipping God, who consider spirituality a human necessity for individual and society, being certain that there is no hope of its survival without spirituality, that it will destroy itself, its .civilization, and the planet on which it lives with its own hands

If we take the study conducted so far as the criterion, it must be said that, firstly, we need to present the Divine teachings in a rational, scientific, and logical manner. We should not offer an anthropomorphic conception of God, neither should we fashion .ears and eyes for Him, nor determine the distance between His two eyes

Further we should not look for Him in the laboratory, or above the clouds, or in the depths of the seas. We should follow the approach stressed by the Noble Qur'an on the issue of God's transcendence (tanzih) by considering Him beyond imagination, analogy, conjecture and fancy. We should not conceive Him only as the originator

of the universe, nor assign a division of work between God and temporal causes. We should counter irrelevant notions of eternal knowledge and eternal will, and, in short, .prevent every kind of intellectual error in issues of theology

Undoubtedly, this is only possible when we affiliate ourselves to a logical and .systematic school of Divine thought capable of fulfilling this need

Islamic teachings are extraordinary rich from this point of view and can fulfill this requirement very well. Islamic philosophers have been able to create a well-reasoned and powerful school of thought in this sphere under the inspiration of the Noble .(Qur'an and the traditions of the Noble Prophet (S) and the Immaculate Imams ('a

One acquainted with this school of thought will not say that the meaning of the first cause is that a thing brings itself into existence. He would never ask that if all things came into existence due to the first cause, what brought the first cause into existence. He would not say that the difficulty of the first cause is unsolvable, or that if we believe in God we will of necessity have to accept a temporal beginning for time, or that if we affirm God's existence we will have to reject the idea of liberty—'either God .or freedom'!—and such things

In Islamic history, the Ash'arites and the Hanbalis introduced stagnation and literalism, which threatened Islamic theology, but they could not resist the dynamism .and sublimity of Islam's profound teachings

Regrettably a group of so-called

intellectuals among Muslim Arab writers have in recent times been propagating a kind of intellectual stagnation and theological agnosticism under the influence of Western empiricism on the one hand and the Ash'arite past on the other. They have been trying to popularize a type of Ash'arite thought mixed with empiricism. Farid Wajdi, and, to some extent, Sayyid Qutb, Muhammad Qutb and Sayyid Abul al-Hasan Nadwi, .belong to this group. To a certain extent this kind of thinking has reached here as well

On the basis that the realm of the metaphysical is an obscure valley unknown to man and Iying outside the limits of human thought and intelligence, and that we are not required by the Shari'ah to enter this unknown valley, this group completely locks up .(the door to the higher teachings (ma'arif

They think that the furthest limit of theology is to study the systems of the universe and remain stupefied by a feeling of wonder. Expression of wonder and awe to them is the zenith of theology. Accordingly, a course in natural history is sufficient to resolve all the issues of theology. Books such as that of Maurice Metterling represent a .complete theology

These persons do not know that the study of creation is the first step, not the last. At the most, through it we can reach the border between nature and the supranatural, .no further

In the fifth volume of the 'The Principles and Method of the Philosophy of Realism,' I have evaluated the different

ways to obtaining the knowledge of God, including the way of empirical science, that is, through the study of nature, identifying the limitations of each of them. There we have proved, firstly, the possibility of the knowledge of Divine and metaphysical .issues for man as a valid science based on sound rational foundations

Secondly, from the point of view of Islam, man is required, or at least permitted, to acquire the knowledge of metaphysical issues through reasoning and inference, not just believe them on the basis of tradition. Thirdly, the path of empirical knowledge, or the path [to the knowledge of God] through nature, is one which extends from nature .to the frontier of the metaphysical, no further

We do not say that it is a path which stretches- from nature to the frontier of the Divine realm, or that it is sufficient, as they say, for 'the journey from the creatures to God' (min al-khalq ila al-Haqq). All that we are saying is that it is a road that leads only .up to the frontiers of the metaphysical

That is, it only proves that nature has a metaphysical plane to which it is subject. But whether that metaphysical is itself created or not; that is, whether that metaphysical power is the creator of all things, or itself created and subject to something beyond it; and presuming that there is nothing beyond it, whether it is simple or composite, one ;or many; are its knowledge and power finite or infinite

is its grace finite or infinite; is man free or not vis-à-vis it—none of these and scores of .similar other questions can be answered by it

But there is a science and discipline which provides replies to all these questions. It enables us through its rational principles to fly from the world of creation (khalq) towards God (Haqq), and take us on 'the journey in the Divine realm in God s company' (bil-Haqq fi al-Haqq), acquainting us in the process with a set of teachings .relating to the Divine realm

However, one step in the way of countering materialist tendencies is to present a school of Divine thought which is capable of answering the intellectual needs of the .thinkers of humanity

In the second stage, the relationship of the issues of theology (metaphysical issues) with social and political affairs needs to be clearly determined. The place of a school of Divine thought as the supportive basis of political and social rights needs to be clarified. Belief in God should no longer be construed as amounting to the acceptance .of tyranny and absolutism of rulers

Fortunately, from this angle, too, the teachings of Islam are rich and clear, although they have rarely been presented. It is the duty of the enlightened Islamic scholars to acquaint the world with the legal framework of Islam from the political and, .especially, the economic point of view

At a later stage, the chaos prevailing in the field of preaching and expression of non-specialist opinions needs to

be countered. There should be no philosophizing of the kind that tries to explain the lines on the melon or advantages of the camel's lack of wings. The issue of a favourable moral and social environment harmonious with the sublime spiritual .teachings should be given utmost importance

The issue of a conducive moral and social environment, for which purpose the duty of amr bi al-ma'ruf and nahy 'an al-munkar (commanding the good and forbidding the evil) has been devised in Islam, is, apart from its other aspects, of extraordinary .importance for preparing the ground for growth of sublime spiritual values

More necessary than everything else, for our times, is that those who are aware of the real Islamic teachings and devoted to them should try to regenerate that combative spirit, which is one of the principal Islamic values. Of course, the restoration of the combative spirit to Islamic teaching requires an intellectual jihad, a .jihad by pen and tongue—and yet another jihad, in action and deed

.And peace upon whoever follows the (path of) guidance

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism- places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

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